

Learned, M.

Application of the Phonetic System
of the American Dialect Society
to Pennsylvania German



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Learned, M. D. 'Application of the Phonetic System of the American Dialect Society to Pennsylvania German,' Modern Language Notes, V (1890), 237-241.

Part I of the Dialect Notes brings us in finished form the phonetic system of the American Dialect Society. It is the purpose of this article to test that system by applying it to the phonology of a specific dialect -- Pennsylvania German -- and thus offer some comments on the system and its further development.

In his 'Pennsylvania German Dialect' (Part I, p. 23) the writer of the present article gave a phonological table representing the P. G. sounds and their corresponding English equivalents and at the same time enclosing in parenthesis the corresponding sounds of WINTELER'S system as represented by Sievers ('Phonetik,' 3.Aufl., p. 82). The marks indicating long vowels were retained as used by WINTELER, in order to make clear the decidedly long quantity of the P. G. vowels in question. As intimated in 'Penn. Germ. Dialect,' page 22, the author refrained from elaborating an involved system of notation, because he hoped later to conform his temporary system to the orthography which should be adopted by the American Dialect Society and the Phonetic Section of the Modern Language Association of America. It was then expected that a system would be worked out which could be employed by all dialectologists -- in the American field at least. Inasmuch, however, as the system published in Dialect Notes gives only English examples as illustrations of the symbols used, and makes no attempt at a phonetic description of the sounds, it may not be out of place here to present the P. G. sounds in the previously adopted orthography and give the corres-

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ponding symbols of the system of the A. D. S., accompanied by the phonetic description in Mr. Bell's nomenclature.

P. G.	BELL	A. D. S.
ɐ	low-back-wide-round	o
ɒ	low-back-narrow-round	ɔ
æ	mid-mixed-wide	æ̃
æ̃	low-back-wide	a?
ë ¹		between e and æ
e	mid-front-wide	e
ɛ	mid-front-narrow	ê
ə	mid-mixed (between narrow and wide)	ə
i	high-front-wide	i
ī	high-front-narrow	ī
o	{ mid-mixed-round (Bell) mid-back-narrow-round (Sweet)	ɔ
ō	{ mid-back-round (Bell) mid-back-narrow-round (Sweet)	ô
u	high-back-wide-round	u
ū	high-back-narrow-round	û
vi(p+i)	cf. simple sounds above	ɔi
gu(g+u)	cf. simple sounds above	ou
ei(a+i)		ai
əi (cf. HALDEMAN #3.)		
b	lip-shut ²	✓
v	lip-divided-voiced	v
d	point-shut ²	

Note 1. When ë occurs in words borrowed from English = ë of A.D.S., cf. 'P.G.D.', "Additions."

Note 2. For what SIEVERS calls "stimmlose mediae," cf. remarks below.



P. G.	BELL	A. D. S.
f	lip-divided-voiceless	f
g	back-shut ²	
ch ³	both sounds, back-voiceless and front-voiceless	
y	front-open-voiced	y
h	throat-open-voiceless (aspirate)	h
j	same sound as y	y
k	back-shut-voiceless	k
l ⁴	point-divided-voiced	l
m ⁴	lip-nasal	m
n ⁴	point-nasal-voiced	n
p	lip-shut-voiceless	p
r	point-open-voiced	r
s	{ front-mixed-voiceless (Bell) } { blade-open-voiceless (Sweet) }	s
t	point-shut-voiceless	t
w ⁵		
z(= t s)	cf. simple sounds above	t s
x(= k s)	cf. simple sounds above	k s
dzh	blade-point-open-voiced (Sweet)	dz
sch (ʃ)	{ point-mixed-voiceless (Bell) } { blade-point-open-voiceless (Sweet) }	ʃ
~	nasal	~

Note 3. ch = N.H.G., has the same sound and is back or front according to the vowel accompanying it.

Note 4. Often pronounced without vocality as in English (cf. BELL, 'Visible Speech', p. 93, note).

Note 5. This is a variety of w between the English w and the N.H.G. w. Mr. Bell suggests that it may be described as an "inner N.H.G. w". It is lip-teeth-open-(very slight)voiced. I don't find Mr. Sweet's "lip-open-voice" the exact description of the S. G. and P. G. w.

Results of the Comparison.

1. Vowels. For the P.G. vowel system the symbols of the A.D.Society are in the main sufficient. The only sound which is not fairly well expressed is that represented by ë in original German words like gëvə, nëm.

2. Consonants. In the case of P.G. consonantism the system of the A.D.Society, being adapted only to English sounds, is inadequate at certain points. In the first place it makes no provision for what I, following SIEVERS ('Phonetik' #20,23B), have called voiceless mediae (SWEET'S half-voiced stops) b̥, d̥, g̥. Hence in order to make the system of the A.D.Society applicable to P.G. and to New English sounds as pronounced in many parts of P.G. territory, it would be necessary to distinguish between voiced and voiceless mediae as Sievers and others have done. So also the sound ch is not provided for.

It may be only anticipating what the A.D.Society have in mind, to express the hope that it will continue to develop its system of symbols until it can express the sounds of all American dialects. May we not expect that the various phonetic systems of Europe and America shall soon be united and thus give uniformity to all the dialect work of both continents? It certainly would be very desirable to have an international committee of phoneticians and dialectologists, appointed to fix upon a uniform system for practical application.

This is the more desirable inasmuch as the U.S. Government has recognized the importance of dialectical statistics. MR. PORTER, superintendent of the census, and Mr. HUNT, special agent, have manifested their interest in the matter by adding questions calling for dialectal statistics in the national census to be taken in June of this year. It will thus be made possible to locate the dialect territories of the country for further investigation.

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